

egotism. Loving Albertine, his hero has on the one hand hardly a thought for her point of view; and on the other is possessed by a jealousy so intensely possessive that he cannot bear her to have a single idea or memory outside his grasp, and is happiest watching her asleep. Further, condemned by ill-health to an inactivity only too favourable, able to endless introspection, he tended, as most of us do, to make his own passion other people's duty. He came to deify his private eccentricity—a Narcissus making his God not only in, but out of, his own image. It was, to be fanciful, as if he who so detested life and so clung to maternal affection, was trying to find in his asthma and his shuttered, fumigated room an escape from this harsh world back to a semblance of the happier days before he first drew the choking bitterness of breath. His mysticism of memory, in short, seems to me one more example of the sanity of Goethe's maxim: 'Mysticism—unripe philosophy, unripe poetry/'

Such, however, is Proust's Universe. It may not be the universe we live in. But he makes it live, and he makes us live in it. That creativeness, above all, is the test of a writer's power. His is a bleak and yet beautiful new world, sordid and tragic at once; not our planet, but like enough for us to be able to breathe there and carry an ineffaceable memory back to our life on earth. There is more oxygen in its atmosphere, so that the intelligence is

twice as keen;
but also more unhappiness and solitude than
in our world
even; for its inhabitants have eyes too long-
sighted, like
those of old age, which can only focus
beauty out of
reach, so that all they seize grows blurred
and dim. And
yet their desolation is half-redeemed for
them by the
splendour of memory and imagination, of all
they have
lost and all they can never win.
Yet perhaps this scientific novel of a
scientific age, with